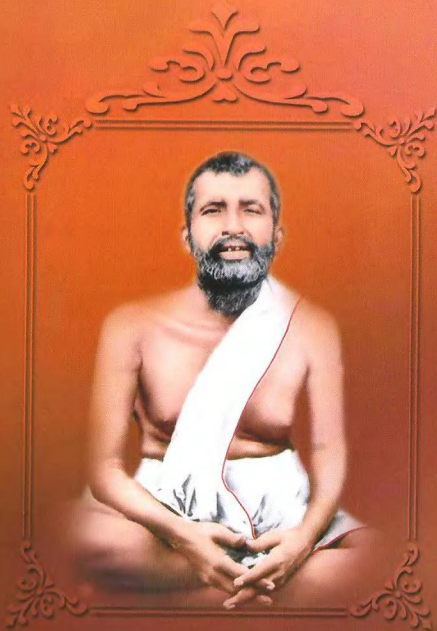


SWAMI NIRMALANANDA ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA



Compiled and edited by
TULASEETEERTHAN

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA
ON
SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA
ON
SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Compiled and edited by

TULASEETEERTHAN

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Ottapalam

Swami Nirmalananda on Sri Ramakrishna
(English)

Compiled and edited by
Tulasateerthan

Published by
Swami Kaivalyananda
President,
Sri Ramakrishna Niranjana Ashrama,
Sri Ramakrishna Nagar.P.O., Ottapalam,
Palakkad Dist, Kerala, India -679 103
Tel: 0466-2244479

Date of publishing : 26.12.2007

Copyright:
Sri Ramakrishna Niranjana Ashrama,
Ottapalam.

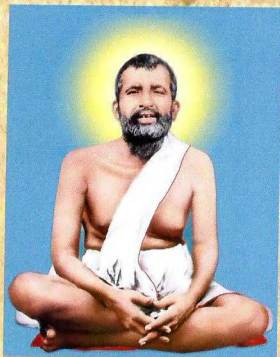
Number of copies : 1000

Printing,
Pellippuram Offset Press,
Karunagappally, Kollam Dist

Cover Design, Type-setting and Lay-out
Premananda Prabhu, Sreeprakash

Price, Rs. 50.00

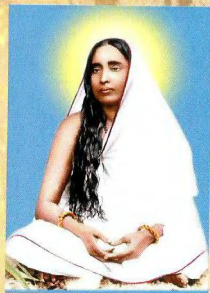
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission in writing from the publisher.



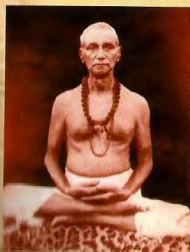
Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna



Swami Vivekananda



Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi



Swami Nirmalananda

Dedicated
At the Lotus Feet of
Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva

in memory of

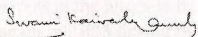
Swami Vishadanandaji Maharaj
and
Swami Chinmayanandaji Maharaj

who introduced to us
Swami Nirmalananda : His Life and Teachings

Publisher's Note

Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj's life was one of intense Ramakrishna - consciousness and was infused with His spirit of universality and religious harmony. Sri Ramakrishna was the one thought that filled his mind and enlivened his words and actions. He was more a practitioner than a preacher of the Ramakrishna ideal. Yet quite often, in response to requests from devotees, Swamiji had to speak on Sri Gurumaharaj and His life-giving teachings. He was always eloquent and impressive as his words had the true ring of an intimate apostle's authoritative finality. It is our belief that most of his pronouncements on Sri Ramakrishna, scattered through his lectures and conversations, are made available in this volume, *Swami Nirmalananda on Sri Ramakrishna*. We will feel our effort in bringing out this volume more than fulfilled if the reader can get a glimpse of the tremendous effect the Swamiji's inspiring words had produced on the listeners as they fell from his lips decades ago.

All the excerpts, except two, are from the source book, *Swami Nirmalananda : His Life and Teachings*, published from Sri Ramakrishna Niranjan Ashrama, Ottapalam, 1943. Those two excerpts are from *Swami Nirmalananda*, by Brahma Gopal Dutt, Calcutta, 1991.



Swami Kaivalyananda

Ottapalam.

Sri Ramakrishna Niranjan Ashrama,

Date: 26.12.2007

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA

The pioneer of the Ramakrishna Movement in Kerala

Tulaseeteerthan

Neo-Vedanta is the Vedanta lived by Sri Ramakrishna and interpreted by Swami Vivekananda. It teaches us that religion is not a holiday hobby but the realisation of the divinity inherent in each one of us with the clarity of a sense-perception. This is man's supreme duty and his final goal which can be achieved only by long and hard spiritual discipline throughout life. However, it shows us an apparently simple path to reach the goal — to do all the work as worship to the God-in-man. This daily discipline, at once easy, effective, and open to all, will change our life itself as an offering to God. This is Practical Vedanta which is central to the message and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

A report on the Ramakrishna Movement in Kerala published during the centenary of Sri Ramakrishna (1936) in the *Prabuddha Keralam* showed that, next to Bengal, the birth place of Sri Ramakrishna and His apostles, Kerala is the other part of the land where the movement had become very strong and the message taken deep roots in the minds of the people. This was emphatically endorsed once again in 1963 during the Vivekananda centenary. However, not many among us are aware of it, nor the fact that such a phenomenon could not have come about without the grand vision of an inspiring leader backed up by a great deal of dedicated work under his direction.

A search for the discovery of the roots of the Ramakrishna Movement in Kerala will take us to the majestic presence and the magnetic personality of Tulasi Maharaj. Swami Nirmalananda, whose dedicated missionary work for the spiritual awakening of Kerala for over a quarter of a century has taken us to this rank of excellence second only to that of Bengal.

Like the other monastic disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Nirmalananda or Tulasi Charan Dutt was born and brought up in Bengal. Though not a Keralite, no other religious teacher, Bengali or Malayali, had worked with half the energy and zest of Swamiji for the spiritual welfare of Kerala. It was he who built the Temple of Ramakrishna from its strong foundation to its swaying spire and consecrated it for worship, not only in the Temple but also in the shrine of the people's hearts.

Tulasi Maharaj was the first *Guru* and guide of all the Ramakrishnites of Kerala even as he was the pioneer of the Ramakrishna movement. It was he who took us to Guru Maharaj and made us members of the great and growing family of Sri Ramakrishna. This much is the pure and simple historical truth which nothing can erase or alter.

Tulasi was the boy pointed out by the Divine Mother to Sri Ramakrishna who initiated him *in the heart* by making use of the '*Pasyanthi* speech which passes beyond the bounds of flesh and falls like breakers in the heart', as Swamiji himself recalls the incident. After Guru Maharaj's *Mahasamadhi* in 1886, Tulasi joined the Baranagore Monastery along with his *Gurubhais* under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda. To Tulasi, as to the other inmates of the monastery, Swami Vivekananda gave the ochre clothes and the monastic name Nirmalananda 'on account of the rare purity of his character' (Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj). In doing the many types of work in the monastery and in serving his *Gurubhais* 'Tulasi Maharaj gave not only the sweat of his body but also his heart's blood' (Mahendranath Dutt). It is said that among his brother-disciples it was Tulasi Maharaj who spent the longest period of time - 12 years - in *tapas* "charging my spiritual battery" in the Himalayas.

In 1897, Swami Vivekananda nominated Tulasi Maharaj to become the first Assistant Secretary and *Acharya* of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. From 1903 to 1906 he did splendid work in America, holding Vedanta and Sanskrit classes and training devotees in meditation. On his return to India 'for the regeneration of his Motherland', Swamiji busied himself with work in North India till 1909 when he was sent to assume charge of the Ashrama in Bangalore in the South. It was from there that Swamiji paid his visit to Kerala to preside over the birthday celebrations of Sri Guru Maharaj in 1911. Swamiji was here only for four short days; but it turned out to be an epoch-making event, opening a new era in the religious history of Kerala.

At that time in Kerala, there was no Ramakrishna Ashrama or missionary work of any kind. But in 1913, within two years of Swamiji's visit to Haripad, an Ashrama there and another at Tiruvalla were opened and consecrated for worship by Swamiji. At the time of His *mahasamadhi* in 1938, he had left behind 16 Ashramas from Trivandrum in the South to Quilandi in the North, some 30 *Sanyasins* and more than that number of *Brahmacharins* and inmates of the Ashramas, besides a large number of householder disciples and devotees around each ashrama. This was Swamiji's gift to the Sri Ramakrishna movement in Kerala, his bequest to the Ramakrishna devotees here. And the least we can do is to gratefully remember the Swamiji.

As a very senior and highly revered monk of the Order and as the President of the Bangalore Ashrama, Swamiji had to be here, there and everywhere. Yet, he never failed to visit Kerala more than once every year. Ignoring his old age and failing health, but with untired feet and unwearied heart, he was on the move, inspiring the people everywhere with the message of his Master. His very presence was a spiritual retreat and festival, a veritable mart of joy and enlightenment. Evidently, Swamiji would have looked upon Kerala as the centre-piece of his mission as well as his final resting place. For, true to his prophetic words, "My soul is in Kerala..... that is my place", he entered *mahasamadhi* in his favorite Ashrama at Ottapalam on the banks of the Bharathapuzha, the only

disciple of Sri Ramakrishna to take his eternal rest on Kerala soil. True, he "cast off his body like a worn-out garment", but he "continues to inspire people" to go to the refuge of Sri Guru Maharaj.

It was "work done as worship" that he put into practice in the Ashramas. No holy day celebrated in the Ashramas was without *Manusha-pooja* along with *Manasa-pooja*, and feeding the poor with a sumptuous feast was also an occasion for inter-dining. His serene presence alone was enough to overcome the age-old caste prejudice. His same-sightedness recognised only one caste--the caste of the devotees of God. All were permitted to go to the threshold of the shrine and among the inmates of the Ashramas could be found all, from the aristocratic *brahmins* to the lowly *panchamas*. This silent crusade with which he broke the back of the demon of caste in Kerala not only invited warm, full - throated appreciation from men like Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali, but also paved the way for the historic Temple Entry Proclamation. Swamiji was indeed the expert physician sent by Guru Maharaj to the "lunatic asylum" of Kerala!

The visit of Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj to Kerala lasting about a month at the invitation of Tulasi Maharaj raised a tidal wave of spirituality in the hearts of the devotees here, and quite a few were fortunate to be blessed with initiation by the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji took a few others to Belur Math on another occasion when they were blessed by the Holy Mother with initiation. It was Tulasi Maharaj who founded *Prabuddha Keralam*, the religious monthly and organ of the Mission which is shortly to celebrate its centenary. It was Swamiji again, who brought the many obscure villages and their backward-looking people to the limelight of modern life as well as to the large Ramakrishna family of far-flung frontiers.

Those who had known the world renowned Swamij Vivekananda and his illustrious lieutenant, Swami Nirmalananda had often pointed out the striking similarity between the two in several respects - for instance their *kshathraveeryam*, the warror-spirit. Neither of them was a meek

saadhu but the aggressive, undaunted knight-errant of the Ramakrishna Order. If the one was the Lion of Vedanta, *Vedanta Kesari*, the other was the Tiger monk, *yati-saardoola*. The one shook up the whole world from its slumber of ignorance, while the other aroused Kerala from its orthodoxy, priest-craft and religiosity, the one with the earth-shattering roar, and the other by stridently blowing on the conch. Total dependence on Sri Guru Maharaj left them nothing to fear and nothing to want. As for Tulasi Maharaj, he was Guru Maharaj's *kaka-Bhusundi*, His oldest Monastic disciple and the last but one to leave the world stage, obeying '*His commands to my last breath*'.

Today, none of his monastic disciples is alive and only some six or seven householder disciples are left to cherish his sacred memory and the memory of those glorious days spent at his holy feet. Yet, in a sense, all the Ramakrishna devotees and monks of the order from Kerala are the children of Tulasi Maharaj. Worship of Vishnu, it is said, becomes complete only with the offering of tulasi leaves at His feet. Worship of Gaya Vishnu, Sree Ramakrishna, here in Kerala, in the fitness of things, should begin and end with Tulasi Maharaj, Swami Nirmalananda, Sri Ramakrishna's Tulasi. That, leastways, is the most befitting homage the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in Kerala can pay to the disciple and messenger of the Master who pioneered the Ramakrishna Movement in Kerala.

Jai Sri Ramakrishna !



A devotee: 'In the case of *jivas* like us who have got grace, initiation etc., from revered souls like you but die before getting realisation, what will be our state?'

Swamiji: "You will get *mukti* (liberation). Otherwise, His (Gurumaharaj's) words will be untrue, which cannot be. At the last moment at least, you will certainly get realisation. You will surely become free in the end, whatever may be your earlier condition". (Pages 289-'99)



Swamiji (to a devotee): It is very good that you are worshipping Sri Ramakrishna. Continue to do so without any break. May Bhagavan bless you. He is the *avatara* of this age. As Krishna was born in Mathura, Sri Ramakrishna was born in Bengal. But that does not make Him the special property of the Bengalees. He belongs to the whole world. He is the uncle moon. He who was Rama and Krishna has now appeared as Ramakrishna. This is what He Himself told us. Worship Him without break.

Devotee: I feel that Bhagavan Himself is speaking through Swamiji. Bless me that I may have *bhakti*.

Swamiji: You know I am speaking His words. I have no words but His. You will have *bhakti*, I bless you. (Page 384).

SWAMI NIRMALANANDA
ON
SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna

(Brief notes of the lecture delivered by Swami Nirmalanandaji in September 1911 during his first visit to Trivandrum)

Some years ago, there lived a *Brahmin* of extra-ordinary piety and devotion in a village in Bengal. Though he was very poor in worldly circumstances, he would not accept charity from any one except a *Brahmin*. Almost the whole of his time was spent in the worship of God. There is a story regarding the depth of his devotion. It is not a fable. I myself heard it from the people of his village when I went there. They had not forgotten it even then. One day, this pious *Brahmin* went to pay a visit to his daughter who was living in a place about eight miles from his village. When he was about to reach his destination, he saw a forest full of flowers fit for worship. At once he forgot all about the purpose of his journey. He collected many beautiful flowers, returned home and was lost in the ecstasy of worshipping God with those flowers. His wife asked him why he had returned so soon after his visit to his daughter. It was then that he remembered the intended visit to his daughter. It is no wonder that a God-intoxicated son was born of this great *Brahmin* who was a prince among *bhaktas*.

There is a story told by the village people with great faith and devotion about the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. That pious *Brahmin* once went to Gaya, sacred among us for the propitiation of the *Pitris*. He performed all the rites prescribed by the *Shastras* with his usual faith and devotion and lay down to sleep at night, exhausted by the penance, fast and the work of the day. At once he had a vision. Gadadhara, the Lord Himself appeared before him and informed him that He would incarnate as his son. Remembering his poverty, the devotee raised many objections. But the Lord paid no heed to them and repeated His resolve to incarnate as his son.

About this time, the pure-minded wife of the *Brahmin* who was in their village had another experience. She went to the local temple with a few companions. She felt that a power had entered her from the God of that temple. Her friends, on hearing this, made fun of her. From that day, she used to have many visions and experiences such as hearing the divine music of the flute of Sri Krishna. When she told these things to her friends, they thought that she had gone crazy and suggested various methods of curing her of what they considered to be her disease. But when her husband returned from Gaya and heard of the matter, he comforted her with the assurance that he had also similar experiences which showed that the Lord was going to bless them soon.

In due time, a son was born and he became the world famous Sri Ramakrishna. The father named him Gadadhara on account of his firm conviction that Lord Gadadhara had incarnated as his son as had been foretold during the vision. The boy grew up and became an expert in all kinds of games. At the proper age, He had to go to school. But He protested

saying that the object of such education was but the earning of bread and butter. What He sought was supreme knowledge. Still, by the compulsion of His elder brother who was a great *Pandit*, He attended school for a time. But He learnt practically nothing from there. In a short time, He gave up that system of studies and engaged Himself in playing with His companions, listening to the recitals of the sacred stories and reciting them Himself without the least alteration to those who were delighted to hear them. Many were surprised at the tremendous memory of the boy who could recite even the longest poems after hearing them but once.

At one time, while He was playing in the fields with His play-mates, He saw clouds gathering in the sky and at once lost all outward consciousness. He said that He was filled with ecstatic joy at seeing the blue colour of the clouds which reminded Him of Sri Krishna. On another occasion, there was a great feast in the house of a rich man of the place. The *Brahmin Pandits* who had gathered there were hotly discussing some abstruse philosophical questions. Each one tried to show off his learning and defeat the others in arguments so that he might get the highest donation from the host. They could not come to any agreement on a question they were discussing. Gadadhara, the boy, who was sitting in a corner suddenly gave them the solution and they were astonished. All the *Pandits* heartily blessed the boy.

At this time, a woman of the non-*Brahmin* caste built a temple near Calcutta. The *Brahmins* began to say that no one among them would instal the image or conduct worship in such a temple. The pious lady was very much distressed and sought the advice of the leading

Pandits of the time. The learned brother of Gadadhara advised her to dedicate the temple to her *Guru* who was a *Brahmin* and hence there would be no objection to any one to instal the image or conduct the worship. She did so. And thus began the relation of Gadadhara to the temple of Dakshineshwara. For a time, his brother was the priest and then Gadadhara had to attend to his duties. At this time He was in a peculiar mood. "Mother, Mother, will you not grant me your vision?" was the incessant prayer of the boy.

For a time, He controlled Himself and conducted the worship in the temple. But soon after, He lost all consciousness of the fact that He was in the world. 'Mother, Mother' was the one cry that ever rose from His lips. Sometimes, He would put the offerings in His own mouth, at other times He would be looking at the sun from dawn to sunset. With the passing of each day, He would deeply lament that one day had passed and the Mother had not revealed Herself to Him. He would rub his face on the ground in agony. He was prepared to give up His life because He was not blessed with the vision of the Mother. After such a period of intense austerities, He was blessed by the Mother. From that time, He would see His Mother near Him whenever He called on Her.

Just as we see each other face to face, so Gadadhara used to see the Mother. He was always a boy full of mirth and fun because He realized that He was the child of the Divine Mother. He used to ask His Mother for everything. He prayed to have a *darshan* of the Lord Sri Krishna and that most beautiful cowherd boy with that marvellous flute was before Him. He wished to be blessed with the vision of Allah and lo! Allah stood in front of Him. Thus, He was blessed with the living visions

of all the Gods. This is the basis of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. Every thing is the Mother, that is, the Divine *Prakriti*, and *Prakriti* and *Brahman* are only two aspects of the same divinity. That Divinity assumes different names and forms according to the desire and capacity of each individual. All religions are but various paths to reach the same Divinity. God is the same though the paths may be different.

All His desires had been fulfilled by the actual, constant and living vision of the Mother. As He could not attend to the routine work of worship in the temple, another person was appointed in His stead. Gadadhara spent His days in a retired spot near the temple. At this time, a *sanyasin* came there. He found in Gadadhara a fit recipient for the highest *Advaita* knowledge and asked Him whether He would learn the Vedantic truths from him. Gadadhara said that He would ask His Mother. She told Him that the *sanyasin* had been sent by Her for that very purpose. That *sanyasin* instructed Him and was astonished to find that this extraordinary person realized in three days the highest *Samadhi* which he had taken more than forty years to attain. From that time, this illiterate boy Gadadhara, born in an out of the way village, began to disseminate Divine light to the world. He became the Divine man, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. (Page, 448-452).

Sri Ramakrishna

(A talk given by Swami Nirmalanandaji in August 1917 at Trivandram,

published in the *Prabuddha Keralam*, Vol-II, No. 12.)

I was a mere boy when I had the good fortune to come into contact with Sri Ramakrishna. I had the privilege of serving Him for four or five years. What shall I say about Him? He was a pure child of Nature without anything artificial in Him. He may be compared to a very rare and invaluable gem, fresh from the mine without being polished and embellished.

At the time of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, He had not the least consciousness of the body. But at other times, He used to be often like a child. Saying "an ant has bitten me; I cannot bear the pain", He would be seen placing his hand in the ant-hole. (There is a belief among the children of Bengal that if one keeps one's hand in an ant-hole, the pain caused by ant-bite will vanish). Seeing this child-aspect, many would think whether He was the great *Mahapurusha* who was expounding a few moments ago the most abstruse topics of *Vedanta* in such a simple, charming and homely manner.

What great wonder! All the doubts of the listeners are dispelled by His narration of His bold realisations. He was never in the habit of

clearing doubts by quotations from the *Shastras* in the manner of a *Pandit*. What acquaintance had this illiterate man with the *Shastras*? But nature was the grand book for Him. I doubt whether any one has ever mastered the book of Nature so closely and deeply as He.

When Swami Vivekananda rushed to Him at first in the pride of intellectual strength with the question "Have you seen God"?, His reply was, "yes, my boy, and I shall also lead you that way if you so wish". This bold reply cast a spell on Vivekananda and he remained devoted to Him for ever. Just consider yourself what an infinite power this uncivilised man must have had !

The great leader of the Brahmo Samaj, S. Keshab Chandra Sen who had attained a very high place in education and refinement, used to visit this illiterate man and sit humbly by His side drinking deep the pure nectar of words that flowed from the natural fountain of His holy lips. When Pratap Chandra Mazumdar and other magnates of the *Brahmo Samaj* would begin to discuss with Sri Ramakrishna, Keshab would forbid them with the remark, "It is not with such a one that you should discuss. Listen carefully to His words of wisdom.

Many, tormented by various doubts and difficulties, used to go to Sri Ramakrishna for getting solace. The Master would instinctively know their condition and give them perfect consolation in an indirect manner, by His talks with others present there. Keshab had caused a rule to be passed by his *Brahmo Samaj* that a girl be given in marriage only after she had completed her 18th year. But he himself had his 12-year old daughter married to a *Raja*. Keshab was for this reason disrespected and

abused by many members of the *Samaj*. Distressed and distracted by this, Keshab came to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master knew nothing of these matters. Keshab sat in a corner. At once, Sri Ramakrishna said addressing another: "Birth, marriage and death are not under the control of man. They are all under God's control. It would be a tremendous foolishness for a man to make rules and regulations regarding these three". Keshab understood and was consoled.

Sri Ramakrishna would not generally wear clothes when He was alone. Like a child, He would have His clothes in His armpit and run hither and thither. Visitors may be pouring in at that time. He would then say, "Some are coming here. They are decent, civilised folk. It is not proper for me to remain like this without clothes. Where are my clothes? Bring them here", and He would search for them. All the time, the clothes may be in His armpit. How wonderful ! I have never seen such a wonderful person in my life or even heard of such a one.

Many have often asked Sri Ramakrishna about the state of *Samadhi*. When He would attempt to speak of it, He would fall into that state. The devoted Mathur Babu has many a time tested Him. Once he took Him to a house of disreputable women. They had been apprised of His coming and told as to what they had to do. They wanted to try all their arts on Him, but it was in vain. He merely said: "My Mother has assumed this form also" and began to praise them as the manifestations of the Divine Mother. They could not approach Him. They were struck with shame. They found fault with Mathur Babu for placing them in this false position of trying to bring down a *Mahapurusha*. Mathur Babu was for the time satisfied. But later on, he began to doubt whether Sri Ramakrishna might not be undeveloped sexually and hence behaved like

this. His thought was read by the Master who conclusively proved to him on another occasion that He was strong, virile and fully developed. Mathur Babu's doubts were completely removed.

Do you think that Swami Vivekananda would believe anything blindly? He doubted the Master as much as he believed Him. Sri Ramakrishna convinced the Swami of His power and greatness. "An Emperor sometimes travels with all his imperial pomp and splendour and sometimes incognito as a beggar. This time, the Emperor has come as a beggar". These words of Sri Ramakrishna to Swamiji referred to the Master Himself. Vivekananda believed and yet doubted. The incident which gave him full conviction is noteworthy.

The Master is about to pass away. Physical power has been completely exhausted and He is lying on His bed. A few moments more and the life-breath will cease to be. Vivekananda is sitting near, still in a doubting mood. He was thinking: "How can I regard this man to be God, this man who is stretched on His sick bed and suffering pain like an ordinary mortal"? This was Vivekananda's doubt. At once Sri Ramakrishna raised Himself up, sat straight on His bed and said with great force, "Are you still in doubt, Noren? You do not believe me yet. He who incarnated as Rama in the *Treta Yuga* and as Krishna in the *Dwāpara Yuga* is verily this Ramakrishna, but not in your Vedantic sense. He who was Rama and Krishna is indeed this Ramakrishna", and pointing to Himself, He passed away.

People belonging to various religions used to visit Ramakrishna, He would give each one the instructions befitting his particular bent of mind, character and nature. In this way, many atheists became great

believers in God. I know of many instances of those addicted to drink, sex or other vices converted by His touch into good and pure people.

His advice to atheists was: "I do not know whether God exists or not. If there be an Almighty God, may He reveal Himself to me. Pray like this with a pure mind incessantly for three days without any intermission. If you do not see God by this, come to me. I shall show Him to you". These were not mere words. I know that many realised the truth of these words.

Sri Ramakrishna used to talk constantly to people who were pouring in day and night about God with great love and supreme compassion, forgetting His own bodily necessities such as food, sleep and rest. Thus, He was attacked by cancer in the throat. Many begged of Him not to talk. But His reply was: "How despicable is this body. It is like a ripe pumpkin. It looks very beautiful from the outside. But the inside is rotten. If some good can be done by this perishable body for the sake of others, what can be more desirable"? This was how He lived unto the last.

Ramakrishna is not born always. His manifestation is an extraordinary event, rare and wonderful, occurring in Nature once in many thousands of years. (Page, 452-456).

Sri Ramakrishna and Same-Sightedness

(A lecture given by Swami Nirmalanandaji on the occasion of the
Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration at Quilon in 1918)

*“Vidyā-vinaya-sampanne Brāhmane Gavi Hastini, suni chaiva Svapāke
cha Panditāḥ Samadarshinah”*

The *Pandits*, i.e., those who have known the *atman*, are same-sighted with regard to a *Brahmana* endowed with learning, humility and other good qualities, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a *Chandāla*”. Such is the teaching of the *Gita*. But many so-called *Pandits* of our land, that is, those who have merely learnt the *shastras*, become same-sighted in another way.

They have no difficulty or hesitation in repeating this *sloka* and commenting upon it most learnedly. They expatiate on the text and prove that all is verily *Brahman*. But it ends there. Their practice is quite different. This is but deceiving the ordinary people. “Everything is *Brahman*. There is no difference between myself and another. The beggar, the rich man, the learned man, the illiterate man, an animal, a tree – all are the same”. This is not merely to be repeated or thought of in the mind. It has to be realised in practice. This is the great lesson Sri Ramakrishna taught by many incidents in His life. I shall narrate one such incident.

Many of you know that there is a great temple, the temple of Dakshineswar near Calcutta and that Sri Ramakrishna used to live there. From the time when His greatness came to be known throughout Bengal, many would go daily to visit Him. Some of them were real seekers after God, and some were mere sight-seers who wanted to enjoy the fine views, the temple, the garden, the Ganges, the huge buildings, the plants, the flowers etc. Some so-called civilised youth belonging to the latter class of people came to Dakshineswar on a certain occasion. They left their carriage outside the temple and began to walk round the splendid garden by the Ganges enjoying the fine breeze. After a time, they thought of entering the temple.

At that time, they saw a person standing nearby. It would seem that that man had not noticed the arrival of these distinguished visitors. He did not appear 'civilised' to them. He had but a loin cloth on. They felt sure that he was the gardener. They wanted to get some flowers from the garden to place them on their button-holes and appear 'highly civilised'. "Come here, gardener" they called in a tone of authority and the man approached them. "Pluck those flowers and bring them to us", they commanded. The gardener did so at once. He did not utter a single word. These 'civilised' gentlemen placed them on their button-holes and were greatly pleased. After they had visited the temple, they thought they might also see the *Paramahansa* and enquired where He was staying.

Thus they came to His room. O God, the gardener they had already met is seated on the smaller bedstead. They were stunned, bewildered. It was then that the truth dawned on them that the person whom they had ordered in tones of authority to pluck the flowers was

none other than the *Jivanmukta*, who had spent many years in various *sadhanas*, had realised God and become thereafter the *Guru* of countless people. Struck with shame and sorrow, they became humble, prostrated before the God-man and retired in haste. But, there was no change in the calm and unruffled face of *Bhagavan* Sri Ramakrishna. He had forgotten that the persons who were now prostrating before Him were the very same persons who had commanded Him but a few moments ago.

When they left the temple, they told some others with great regret of the great sin they had committed. Thus, we also came to know of it. One day, we asked Sri Ramakrishna about it. We said, "When they commanded You under a misapprehension, could You not have told them that You were the *sanyasin* living in this temple and not the gardener"? *Bhagavan's* reply was "What are you saying? Am I not the gardener? Yes, I am the gardener and the garden. I am everything. I do not see any difference. What they said was quite true".

This is real same-sightedness. This is real *Paandityam*, the state described by the Lord in the *Gita* as '*samadarshitvam*', same-sightedness. This is the state of the vision of oneness, non-differentiation, attained by a true *jnanin*. It is this state of non-differentiation we should try to attain by the complete destruction of our egoism. Without that honest attempt, there is no use in learning the *shastras* and trying to expound them. Seek, therefore, to put into practice what you have learnt. May Sri Ramakrishna bless you to do so. (Pages, 456-459).

The Address to Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj

Revered Swamiji,

The spirit of unity in the midst of diversity that you have maintained throughout your mission amongst the ostensibly differing communities of India, and the resonant chord of constructive and synthetic thought and work of which you have been a living exponent as a true co-adjutor of Swami Vivekananda, make us approach you on your arrival here, with our tribute of appreciation and regard and to place such tribute before you in a spirit of humility.

From the day you received your inspiration from the Great Master, your spiritual nature has grown stronger, brighter and higher, serving as a beacon light to the followers of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in helping them to tread the path laid down by them for the service of our beloved Motherland and humanity. We crave your blessings, and we earnestly trust that your parental care, friendly love and helping hand will always be extended to us in the journey we have undertaken.

We remain,

Ever yours in service and love,

Members of the Vivekananda Mission

Calcutta, 22nd September 1930

Extracts from the Swamiji's Reply

"Here is an humble and most insignificant servant of Sri Ramakrishna before you. He is already a little more than three score and six. Years of arduous and troublesome work have told upon his health and he is not a great speaker either. You cannot, therefore, expect a long speech from him. Though I cannot properly express my feeling on account of the fulness of my heart, you will instinctively understand what is going on in my heart. You will feel it vibrating in your hearts too, for you have your hearts tuned to mine.

"Only a few months back while I was in Bangalore, I was very glad to know of some kind of socio-religious movement along the lines of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda order going on in this place. Indeed slowly the idea grew up amongst those who desired to take a forward march in that direction, that they should organise themselves for carrying the work along the lines laid down by the Master. This idea assumed practical shape when here was started an organisation, still then only a nucleus, but fully inspired and instilled with the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

As I have already told you, I became really glad when I heard of it and agreed to co-operate with it when I was asked to do so. I am glad to see that the nucleated young body is to-day vitalised and I am sure

that in time it will radiate the light which the illustrious Swamiji came to broadcast all over the world. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came to find peace and harmony in the midst of diveristy and discord. Those of us, who are now desirous of carrying aloft their light and their message of peace and harmony, cannot, in the least desire to plant the smallest seeds of discord while engaged in the work of the Master. As such, this new organisation is neither a competitor nor a counter-institution to any other organisation or movement with the same or similar ideals and purpose. This world and the sphere of work are large enough to allow more organisations than one to work side by side or in co-operation. That can be easily understood and I need not, therefore, dilate much on it.

“However, I fervently pray to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that their fostering light may guide your path. There may be many impediments and pitfalls in the way, but these will be removed by their blessings. If we have sincere and complete devotion, we will live long and grow into a gigantic organisation which will spread over the length and bredth of Bharatavarsha. It is bound to grow and spread its branches and we will see one day that the sons and daughters of the *Rishis* are drinking at this new fountain of inspiration. The light that was blazing under the banyan tree of Dakshineswar will scatter its rays everywhere and illumine every sphere of activity.

History tells us that whenever a great man comes into the world, advancement is made in all spheres of national life, whether social, civic or otherwise. Such has been the case with Sri Ramakrishna. He came to bring peace and harmony. The so-called political and social movements

cannot bring peace unless humanity learns to think that every human being is a part and parcel of God and sons and daughters of the Almighty. When the world will put on that angle of vision, peace will regin everywhere.

"I fully appreciate the very kind and loving words expressed about my humble self who is not even fit to touch the dust of the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. I feel sincerely grateful to you and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your love to me. I pray, if my words have any power, for this nucleaed body to live long". (Pages, 466-468).



Inaugural address of
Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj

*as Chairman of the First Religious Convention of Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna
Mahotsab, (Calcutta), commencing on Friday, the 20th February 1931.*

The call has come to me. It is the inscrutable way of the Great Mother why She should choose this humblest of the humble to serve Her. There lies the mystery of the *Shakti*, the beauty of it, and the eternal love of the Divine in whose eyes there is true *Samadarsana* – all children are equal to Her. It is the same with Her divine child, Paramahansa Deva. With Him there was no distinction between creeds and faiths, past and present, the powerful and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the devout and the profligate and between the temple and the market place. He embraced all and made obeisance to all, taught all and learnt from all. That spirit which wended its way through all the labyrinthine alleys of Bagh-Bazaar, His favourite haunts, for picking up the yearning souls as His material vehicles transfused itself into all the labyrinthine complexes of modern civilisation for giving His magic touch to the unilluminated, the oppressed and the tempest-tossed wayfarers of the world. I bow to Him that He has, in that eternal spirit of charity and compassion, chosen me as His *ratha*; but He is still the *Rathin* that speaketh unto you.

I shall not, on this solemn occasion, trouble you with dry teachings and sayings. There were a thousand and one occasions when the Great Prophet Himself used to remain a mute spectator before a thirsting soul with occasional glimpses of smiles hovering between his penetrating eyes and quivering lips. For verily, it is not the *Vaikhari* speech alone that speaketh, but the *Pashyanti* speech that rises in the heart like waves and passes beyond the bounds of the flesh and falls like breakers on the hearts of the audience like sweet caresses to lull them, to soothe them, to embrace them. I am one of them who has had the good fortune to experience this touch, and I shall fail in my task if I do not carry that touch. May He infuse in me His *Shakti*!

Again, it is in that eternal fountain-head of the *Atman* of that Great Saint, in His flow of love that every warring creed found a synthesis. Religions became universal in His simple but illuminating and vitalising rays of wisdom; and the down-trodden and the cast-away found their haven of grace and peace in His programme of *seva*.

Verily! Verily! such a God-Man was born whose 96 birth-day we have the proud privilege of celebrating here with you all, respected brethern of different nationalities, faiths, and creeds - one whose life was a living evidence of the depth and sweetness of all religions; one whose holiness, blessedness, unstudied wisdom, child-like peacefulness and affection towards all men and whose consuming, all-absorbing love for God were unique and unprecedented. The Great Vivekananda truly said that long before the ideas of universsal toleration and sympathy were mooted and discussed in any country in this world, there lived a man whose very life was itself a Parliament of Religions.

Indeed, the day of harmony has dawned with the birth of such a Prophet who is the fulfilment of the sages of the past – a summation of them all who could conceive of such a harmonious blending of conflicting creeds and dogmas of the different faiths of the world and who demonstrated it in every moment of His life.

Brethren, we remind you of a few precepts of the Great Prophet of Synthesis when offering you a cordial welcome on behalf of the Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration Committee.:-

(1) Religion is ONE.

Therefore, unto all the devotees of all the religions of the world,
Adoration!

Religion is One. it hath been so for all times, and it shall be so for ever!

(2) The Lord is One, though He hath many Names.

Alas! Alas! that man should be quarrelling with his brother-man, quarreling in the name of Religion, in the dear name of the Lord Himself!

For, verily, I say unto you, the Lord is One;

But the Lord hath a thousand names! (Pages, 468-471).



Concluding speech of Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj

*as Chairman of the Religious Convention of the
Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Mahotsab on Saturday, the 21st February, 1931.*

GENTLEMEN,

You have heard what the different religious protagonists say about their doctrines and cults. I hope, being a Hindu, you cannot but show respect for others' opinions and others' points of view. As our great *Gita* lays down, all the paths lead to Him – *Yē yathā mām prapadyanthe thāmsthadhaiva bhajāmyaham*.

You have also heard the differentiations that make out the peculiar features of a particular faith. It all depends on the emphasis that one gives on one or the other aspect of human life. And I hope you have also seen the underlying unity wherein lies the all-embracing character of such a communion as we, humble harvest-gatherers in the field, endeavour to find out on this platform.

Whether you are a *jnani* to explore and comprehend with the power of your intellect, the truths of here and hereafter, or you are a

man of action to serve and co-operate so that men may achieve and glorify, or you are a researcher to attain to higher and higher pursuits of human potentialities, or a devotee to dive deep into the bliss of the spirit-life, there is underlying all these different view-points a holy thread that binds all, a synthetic entity that transcends and yet interpenetrates the domains of intellect, feeling and action

I am fortunate that I have come in touch with such a synthetic personality in Ramakrishna Deva. You may have come across others. All respects to them. I shall close this conference with only three words. Respect, Liberty and Love which I have witnessed in my revered Guru transformed into self-respect, self-realisation and self-renunciation. It is these key-notes that are necessary to be remembered in this troublesome times of warring nations and malignant reactions. If, in this small endeavour of ours, we can imprint on you these three words, Respect, Liberty and Love, we think we preach *Paramahansa* Ramakrishna Deva. And in that mission we sow the seed of a great synthesis. (Page, 471-473).

Address at the Nikhil Banga Ramakrishna Mahotsava

Delivered by Srīmat Swami Nirmalanandajī Maharaj on 3rd March 1931.

GENTLEMEN AND FRIENDS,

Ramakrishna has become a household word to every Bengalee, nay, it has become a household word throughout the length and breadth of the whole of India, perhaps in several countries beyond India.

HIS MESSAGE

What is Ramakrishna and what is His message? His life and teachings you have already heard from the various eminent and learned speakers this evening. I do not like to add anything to that with the exception of a little experience that this humble speaker has gained by coming in touch with that wonderful personality, whose spiritual fire was burning day and night constantly under the Panchavati a little less than a century back, and whose 98th Birthday Anniversary we have all gathered here this evening to celebrate. It was a little over five decades ago that this humble speaker had the good fortune to visit the temple of Dakshineswar and to fall at His holy feet and receive His blessings.

WHO IS A *PARAMAHAMSA*?

Who is a *Paramahamsa*? People called him *Paramahamsa*. In my child-mind, in my imagination, I pictured a *Paramahamsa* as a man with matted locks, long beard and ashes smeared all over his body and a very serious and grave man. What I found quite unexpectedly was that He was none of that; He was neither a *Yogi* nor a *Sadhu* nor a *Paramahamsa* nor anything of the kind. Though He was a little advanced in years at the time, to all outward appearance, He was a veritable child of nature. With no pretensions, no poses and no assumed airs, He appeared as a simple child of nature – a child whose heart and soul were never sophisticated by the culture, education and civilisation of the modern days. His mind refused to take any polish of the modern system of education. He was absolutely illiterate in that sense. But He was deeply steeped in the spiritual wisdom of the *rishis* of old, as was revealed unto him by his *sadhanas*.

The whole nature was His only book which He did not fail to closely read, every page of it. That was all. I could not know His caste, as He did not wear a holy thread. I could not understand whether He was a *sadhu* as He was not apparently grave but would smile, apparently at nothing. He would be smiling sometimes with a vague look. You can well understand it if you happen to look at the eyes of an infant, how the infant looks vague with smiles on its lips. Then, when at times He appeared serious, He seemed to plunge deep into meditation and His whole appearance and mode would completely change. It was, in fact, a riddle to me how to study Him and what to know of Him.

I will now relate to you a little story about Him. Once a little ant stung His finger. He was under the pain of that sting and was almost beside himself, crying like a child. One of the temple *Pujaris*, seeing His childlike nature persuaded Him, as he would have done to a little child to turn away his mind from the thoughts of pain, to put His wounded finger into the ant-hole in order that the ant might draw out the poison of the sting, so that He would be free from pain. And He actually placed His finger there! Now, you see, the man who had controlled His senses and every grain of His whole body, had been quite beside Himself as an ordinary human being with the pain of the sting of an ant, and, to be relieved of the pain, acted according to the dictates of the *Pujari* just like a little child. This fully demonstrates the child-like nature in Him. At the very next moment, however, He could have been found talking to great *Pandits* and learned men like Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratap Chandra Mazumdar. These two diametrically opposite characteristics in His nature seemed to me to be a special phenomenon of the spiritual domain.

WHAT HE WAS

We do not know what He was. We cannot identify Him with any particular form of religion. He was neither a Hindu, nor a Muhammadan, nor a Christian, nor a Zoroastrian, but He was all and also beyond all. He was just the essence of all religions. He was the embodiment of the spirit of all religions. He was the real vitality of all religions, nay, He was the personification of that eternal spirit of religions.

SANATANA DHARMA

Just now, a friend of mine told you about "*Sanatana Dharma*". Its literal meaning is religion eternal—the truth that is existing eternally. Our old, old *rishis* have told us that they have actually come into contact with that spirit that was revealed unto them, and they became the embodiment of the spirit themselves. That was their realisation, and they never claimed that to be their religion, but that it was eternal truth. Ramakrishna, I think, was the personification, embodied in flesh and blood, of such an eternal truth. Consequently, He was the vitalizer of all religions.

He did not belong to any particular form of religion but He was the concretised channel through which the eternal truth found its way. We cannot, therefore, identify Him with any particular form of religion. We cannot call Him a *Paramahansa* or a great saint or a great *Avatar*. He was none of that, but was truth and truth itself manifested in a concretised form. In fact, as days rolled on, I gained the experience that He was the very sustenance of all religions and that we cannot monopolise Him. He is the eternal sustainer and vitalizer and, in fact, the vitality itself of all religions.

Of course, we, in Bengal, must be very proud because His nativity was here but we cannot claim Him as solely belonging to us. He is the universal moon, uncle moon. But still we do monopolise Him, as we are, after all, human beings. We say, He is our own; the Americans say – He is our own, and the Muhammadans also say He is our Ramakrishna. This is due to the fact that Ramakrishna was neither a Hindu, nor a Christian nor a Muhammadan, but that He was all and beyond all. This is my humble view of Sri Ramakrishna.

VITALIZING RELIGION

Next thing, I think, Ramakrishna had come at a particular stage when we were going to lose faith in almost all religions. He, therefore, came to vitalize all religions. He took all the various existing forms of religion into His own spiritual laboratory where He tested them and found the results of every religion to be one and the same. This He derived not by intellectual comprehension, not by making a comparative study of all religions, but by His own experience through actual realisation. He was, therefore, a living demonstration of the eternal truth.

The next thing I want to tell you, gentlemen, is that at this particular age there were disharmony, sectarian views and various other elements that were disquieting. It is to settle this disorder of things and to bring about peace and harmony that Sri Ramkrishna came here. His cause is not merely national but international. He came to bring about peace in every home of every country of the whole world. He is the peace-harbinger of the whole universe.

STRIKING PERSONALITY

When we study the history of our ancient religion and of the *rishis*, we find one striking fact that whenever there was any phenomenal ruffle in the domain of spirituality, there appeared on its horizon a striking personality—a personality that is nothing but concentrated energy of spirituality to settle the disputes and to bring about peace by showing the underlying unity of various forms of creed, sect and cult. Thus we find

in the Vedas, "*Ekam Sat Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti*" i.e., "God is one, men call Him by various names".

In the *puranic* age, we find the advent of another harmoniser showing the underlying unity in the then existing forms of religion in the person of Lord Sri Krishna. And now, at the present age and at this particular critical juncture, when all the different forms were fighting against one another, and when the atmosphere of spirituality was dinning with disharmony, disquietitude and peacelessness, a similar wonderful man in the person of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was born in the interior of a village in Bengal to re-establish the ancient religion of India, namely, *Sanatana Dharma*. And it is He who brought the same spirit of harmony of all religions as did the *rishis* of old. (pges, 476-481).

The Address of Welcome Presented by the citizens of Salem

REVERED SWAMIJI,

We, the citizens of Salem, desire to welcome you amidst us here on the auspicious occasion of the Centenary Celebration of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

You had the privilege of actually sitting at the feet of the Master and are, therefore, eminently fitted to carry the message of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa to the groping millions of the world. Like your revered colleague, Swami Vivekananda, you possess an indomitable zeal and an ardent passion for work.

Your services to South India are invaluable. The existence of eighteen mutts in Tamil Nadu and Kerala started and conducted under your guidance and inspiration is sufficient testimony to your zeal and perseverance in the cause of religious revival in this part of the country.

Salem has the proud privilege of being one of the centres of activity of the Ramakrishna Movement. Your occasional visits to this institution and your inspiring talks during those occasions gave an impetus to the movement in this city.

We once more express our pleasure in having you in our midst on this auspicious occasion.

Salem,
15-03-1937.

We beg to remain,
Revered Swamiji,

Your affectionate devotees,
The Citizens of Salem.

(Pages, 503-504)

Swamiji's reply to the Address of welcome

"I never called Ramakrishna an *Avatar*. He is only a man. The spiritual fire He ignited under the sacred banyan tree in the temple garden at Dakshineswar radiated the spiritual light throughout the earth".

"In Europe, we find commercialism as also militarism, whereas the real edifice of India is religion. All other improvements that we find in India are more a superstructural ornamentation than anything else.

NOT FOR ONE SECT OR COUNTRY

"Sri Ramakrishna cannot be monopolised by any body of men. Ramakrishna did not come to this world to add to the innumerable sects here. He came as Uncle Moon (as the moon is called by the people in Bengal) and is common to all the people. Let me recall to you the verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* which says, 'Whoever with great devotion worship me I am in them and they are in me'. So said Lord Krishna. So is Ramakrishna, as all other great men of our land. They are for the whole of humanity and not for any sect or country alone. So I say, Ramakrishna is not for Indians alone. His cause is not merely national but it is international.

"He came not to create any new sect but to vitalize the existing sect. The real essence of all His teachings was to transcend all religions. He is the very essence and abstraction of all religions and spiritual forms. How can abstraction create another sect in the world? Therefore, He came to pervade all forms of religion with their sects and sub-sects and to vitalize and consolidate them. As Indians, we must be proud of Him, but we cannot monopolise Him".

"Change is inevitable, but care must be taken to see that only the form undergoes the change but not the real substance".

CONSOLIDATION OF SECTS AND RELIGIONS

"If we linger behind and cannot follow the trend of the times, we call ourselves orthodox. Even orthodoxy differs materially from time to time. Ramakrishna often said, 'Akbar's sovereign must be exchanged for the coin of to-day'. In the Vedic times, there were no *Avataras*. But now, we worship many gods in the form of idols. That is good. Only things should not be thrown away but should be exchanged. Thus Ramakrishna's teaching appealed to all classes and religionists whether orthodox or heterodox. So long as creation exists, there must be variety, and Ramakrishna devoted Himself to vitalize and consolidate this variety of sects, religions, etc. He did not come to create anything new".

(Pages, 504-506)

On Sri Ramakrishna

From Conversations

Trivandrum - April 1922

Q. Sri Ramakrishna was a great spiritual power. Yet, He could not accept food touched by some. How can it be explained?

S. I can't say how it can be explained. He himself could not account for it. He did not label men as good or bad. He simply could not accept food touched or offered by people whom we call bad. Something within forbade Him from accepting it; that is all He knew, not the why of it. Once, when Swami Saradananda was coming to Dakshineswar with sweet-meats sent by his mother as an offering, a relative of his also sent some cakes. Sri Ramakrishna ate the sweets sent by the Swamiji's mother. He could not touch the other offering. He did not allow even His house-holder devotees to eat it. All such offerings, he used to give to Swami Vivekananda.

The other disciples suspected that it was the Master's partiality towards Narendra and they decided to eat some. Once, Swami Brahmananda tasted a bit, and suffered for it. He lost all peace of mind.

Sri Guru Maharaj laughed and said "well served - you didn't heed my words". For *sadhakas*, Rakhal is the example, not Narendra. A *Sadhaka* should observe these rules. After attaining *jnana* and *siddhi*, one may set them aside. Swami Vivekananda was a born *Siddha*. He had not to practise *Sadhana* to attain any *Siddhi*. If *Sadhakas* disregard the rules and regulations, they are liable to fall.

(Page, 267)

Calicut - November 1928

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was an expert physician in the spiritual realm. He could know the tendencies and *Samskaras* of each particular aspirant. The *mantras* and injunctions He gave to different disciples were different. Each had the freedom to worship his chosen deity. All got the desired result. In this way, Ramakrishna could initiate not only Hindus but Christians and other religionists as well, for He had realised the truth of all religions. Hence, He is accepted as a world teacher. To initiate each one according to his own character, temperament and *Samskara* is the special feature of the Ramakrishna order. In this respect, Sri Ramakrishna taught His disciples to follow His method and they are doing so. (Page, 278).

Benares

Remember His words, "Those who come here are very fortunate. They will have no more birth". That is, those who accept His new *Bhava* (this ideal of His) will have no re-incarnation. It is indeed your great good fortune that you have come here, within the sphere of His influence, His ideals. He has unbounded mercy on you. His infinite grace is on you.

Believe, believe. Do not think that, because a person seems to be a sinner in our eyes, the grace of God is not on him. He is the Ocean of Mercy. He has taken the human body on account of His grace towards us. The sinner also will certainly get *mukti*. These are His very words. However sinful a man may appear to us, if he but once comes within the sphere of His influence, he will have no more birth.

Q. Swami, Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "The wind of His Grace is ever blowing. Unfold your sail". What is the meaning of this?

S. (After a brief pause). "Do something and try to get within the range of the wind of His Grace. Afterwards, you will not have to exert yourself in any way. Have you not seen the boatmen bring the boat to the Ganges with great labour and exertion, pulling oars with all their might and then they raise the sail and take rest, smoking and enjoying all the time, and the boat goes on under the favourable wind? So also, we have to work hard, advance somehow or other in the beginning. But when once we are within the sphere of influence of His Grace, everything will be accomplished by itself. Then you need not work so hard. (Page, 295).

Is there any limit to His Grace? Do you not see your Latu Maharaj whose memorial temple has been erected by you of late and who is being worshipped by you now? What was he to start with? He was but a shepherd of Chapra (in Bihar). He came to Calcutta in search of a job. Ramachandra Dutt made him his peon. Afterwards, he was employed to do services such as rubbing oil etc. to Sri Ramakrishna. But what a wonderful transformation! Sri Ramakrishna made him the great Swami

Adbhutanandaji. What a contrast between the illiterate shepherd of Chapra and the *Siddha* Swami Adbhutanandaji! What infinite and unbounded grace! (Page, 296).

Tellicherry - 13th June '27

Sri Ramakrishna came to appeal to all. That is why He was not learned in the scriptures. He gave a death-blow to the highest authority attributed to the *Sastras*. Sri Ramakrishna alone boldly proclaimed that the *Sastras* were catalogues or lists of things. He boldly said that the *Vedas* themselves are only the words of inspired men. That is why Swamiji said that *Vedas* meant not books, but inspiration. Sri Ramakrishna taught the masses in simple language. The same ideas were taught by Swamiji in the language of the intellegentsia of the world. Swamiji and *Bhagavan* put new life into everything.

Now you do not understand *Bhagavan* or Swamiji. After hundreds of years, every word of theirs will be quoted as authority. Already *Bhagavan's* words have become so. Formerly, they tried to show that *Bhagavan* got His ideas from the Brahmos or so. Now they have given up the attempt. Instead, they now attack Swamiji saying that this is Swamiji's own idea. As time goes on, they will accept his words as authoritative like the words of Krishna and Vyasa. Not only that, they will accept the words of all His disciples. (Page, 324-325).

Ottapalam - June, 1935

It was 5 p.m. Swamiji was sitting in the portico surrounded by devotees. Of his own accord Swamiji began.- These are times of change

in everything. But there is a basic principle running through all. That principle is changeless. That is God. It was to point out this immutable basic principle that Sri Ramakrishna came. God is the goal of all Indian activities. Religion is the life of our land. If that is taken away, India perishes. India cannot understand or appreciate politics divorced from religion. Once Gokhale said in Bangalore that politics should stand apart from religion. People did not accept his words. The same Gokhale said in after years that politics must be spiritualised, if it is to touch the hearts of the masses. Experience taught him the truth about our nature. Tilak, Gandhi and others also have understood this. That is why they have mingled religion with politics and that is why they have a following.

Sri Ramakrishna came from an obscure village. He was like an uncut diamond. He did not come to lecture or to argue about God, but actually to show God to us. The existence of God cannot be proved by logic, however keen or subtle it may be. If Ramakrishna had had modern education, He would have been claimed as a product of University education. But He had it not. He was simply the embodiment of the spiritual energy of India. Just think of how gigantic His intellect was. Without education, without association with the educated, without any of the present day culture, He could dive deep to the very bottom of all mundane and spiritual matters, keenly observe and correctly understand the multifarious tendencies of the modern minds, see far into the future and prescribe appropriate remedies for all its ailments.

But this time, there was no necessity for scholarship. This is an age of demonstration. No amount of theories or arguments will satisfy the people. Every fact has to be demonstrated as in a laboratory. *So, Sri*

Ramakrishna came not as a scholar but as a demonstrator, a great religious laboratory in Himself. He did not theorise. 'God is. I see Him, I can show Him to you', that was what He said. He did not argue. Though Himself illiterate, the proud heads of profound scholars touched His feet in all humility and reverence. He did not come to establish any sect or any special form of religion.

India has had to bear many a severe blow struck by foreign hands from time to time; she has had to suffer many a dire calamity, to tide over many a difficulty, to escape many a peril on her way. She grappled with all opposing forces, subdued them and survived them all. She did not die. Her spirit was not touched, much less broken. If it had been broken, she could not have given birth to a Sri Ramakrishna. By producing Him, India has once more declared to all the world that she will not die, however much her enemies might try to crush her, to take her life away. Her life, her *Dharma*, though apparently dead or slumbering, will rise up and assert itself. Sri Ramakrishna held that *Dharma* aloft.

Along with that He held up the *Dharma* of other lands as well. If *Hindu Dharma* alone was His concern, He would not have practised Christianity and Muhommedanism. He did not merely utter by word of mouth that all religions are true. He actually practised them and found them true and then proclaimed that all religions were really true and if practised sincerely, would lead to God. He did not make a cosmopolitan religion like the Brahmo Samaj by picking up some essentials from all and combining them to form a new one. That is something like creating a new and wonderful form with Japanese nose, European eyes, Indian face and Negro body. He did not attempt it.

He left each religion intact without any admixture. At the same time, He realised their underlying unity, the recognition of which alone will lead to harmony and mutual tolerance. All the different religions will continue to exist as at present. There will be no change in their external form. The internal essence, the core, will be found to be the same, as vitalised by Him. The Christian will remain a Christian in form; his spirit will be permeated by Sri Ramakrishna. So with the Muhommedan. Gradually the whole world, influenced by His spirit will take shelter at His feet.

Recently there was a controversy in some newspapers. I read it. The *Brahmos* claimed Him as a *Brahmo-samajist*, because, they contended, He used to be present at their meetings. The *Shaktas*, on the other hand, opposed them saying that Sri Ramakrishna was an out-and-out worshipper of *Shakti* and therefore a *Shakta*. The Christians who are not wanting hold that He is an incarnation of Christ. All of them want Him as their own. None rejects Him, only each one of them desires to make Him his exclusive property although, in fact, He is the common property, the common ideal of all. He is the guide not only of all religionists, but of all materialists, nihilists and atheists.

The *Avataras* of old gave *Brahmajnana* only to devotees of steadfast faith and a long record of good *Samskaras*. Such deserving souls alone got their grace. But Sri Ramakrishna calls upon all—even rank atheists—to partake of *Brahmajnanam*. “Oh! man! I shall show you the truth which will make you free”. That is Ramakrishna’s message. He was actually instructing the atheists as suited their nature. He may not be easily understood by the hard fossils who have never cared for what is vital in their religion. Even these frogs in the well will come to Him in due time.

The rays of this uncut and unpolished gem will issue forth and illumine all lands. It will then be reflected back to India. The reflection will be of the gem as cut and polished by the foreigners according to their taste and understanding. It is only then that the Indians will open their eyes to His glory and understand Him. The gem is our own, not of the foreign people. They will simply give it a graceful shape and polish. They will interpret His life according to their own lights; they will give scientific reasons and explanations. Whether explained rationally or not, Truth will always remain Truth. His life and glory do not depend upon any scientific explanation. They shine in their own light.

Hereafter the work of all institutions and the life of all nations will be moulded in Ramakrishna-fashion. Politics and Government and all such things will have to pass through that mould, viz., Ramakrishna. I may not live to see all those wonderful happenings. The next generation will see it. The power of Ramakrishna is now in its infancy, just beginning to spread. That mighty power will take years to fully manifest itself and envelop the world. All things will be pervaded, devoured by it. The effulgence of Sri Ramakrishna will permeate everything. There will be no 'Ramakrishnaism' or Religion of Ramakrishna. There is no question of sectraianism at all. His spirit will be accepted by all.

I do not know if you understand what I say. I labour under a disability. I find no words to express what I have in mind. What was He ! How very few have understood Him! But there are some who can foresee things. They can and do see even now how Sri Ramakrishna has attracted the heart of the world, how all organisations, institutions and religions and lives of different nations have begun to flow towards that ocean which is Sri Ramakrishna. (Pages, 367-371)

Ottapalam - Nov. 1936

What was the secret of the most cultured men of the age like Keshab Sen and Pratap Muzumdar going to Sri Ramakrishna and mutely listening to His words? Did He ever go to England like them and make eloquent and learned speeches? Did He preach *Swadesi*, or Socialism, or *Khaddar*? Did He even do anything to attract public attention? Rather, He shunned publicity and never went out but once at the request of Mathura Babu for a pilgrimage. He used to visit His devotees occasionally, that was all. Yet what wealth of experience and keen observation He had ! How much of practical wisdom and common sense in the ordinary affairs of the world He displayed ! He threw floods of light on the most common things which we pass by unnoticed. The whole world now worships Him. (Page, 397)

Bhagavan's children form a different class, I mean His direct children. They have vast experience and are very learned also. Yet, how obscure and humble their lives are ! Look at the great Swami Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Abhedananda and Saradananda. They were all men of wide experience and vast knowledge, and yet, very simple in their lives! Without any pomp or show or advertisement, they did Sri Gurumaharaj's work. You don't care to see things in the proper light. Watchfulness is the secret of one's becoming wise. (Page, 397-98).

Bhagavan's birthday - March 1937, Ottapalam Ashrama

Sri Ramakrishna is a universal figure. He cannot be exclusively claimed by His devotees and disciples. Every man, every nation has a right to

celebrate His birthday and to worship Him. It is not right to think that all the celebrations in His name all over the world are the work of the Ramakrishna – sanyasins. Rama was born in Ayodhya. Yet, Malayalees celebrate *Ramanavami* in Malabar. Can the Ayodhya people claim it as their own ? Rama is a universal figure. He belongs to the whole world. God is not the private property of any sect or individual. He is everybody's. So is Ramakrishna.

He was neither a Hindu, nor a Christian nor a Muhammedan. He was all of them. He was against creating any sect or creed. Has God any particular religion? God is God. The form which you see in the picture of *Bhagavan* is only a vehicle which conveys and radiates the concentrated, dazzling light called Ramakrishna. The various forms and ideals, all belong to the spiritual system and go with God. God has no religion or caste or colour. It is man that makes such distinctions as a *Paria's* God, a *Nambudiri's* God and so on. Uncle moon, *Bhagavan* used to say, is the uncle of all. (Page, 419).

Sri Ramakrishna not only realised God, but gave realisation to others. He was a spiritual laboratory where God was demonstrated before our very eyes. He was the living God. He did not talk about religion, He lived it.

Later, unveiling His portrait at the local High School, Swamiji said, "Ramakrishna by Himself is like water, having no colour or form. He takes different forms by entering into vessels of different kinds. He is an international figure. His message is being understood and appreciated not only in India or by theists alone, but all over the globe, by rank

materialists and western rationalists as well. He cannot be monopolised by the Indians or the Hindus, still less by the Ramakrishna Mission. The various celebrations and the enthusiasm evinced in them are not those of the Ramakrishna Mission or movement. It is the peoples'. The whole universe has to be in transport of joy on the occasion of Ramakrishna celebrations. Because, the spiritual brilliance of Ramakrishna will penetrate into the darkest and most obscure corners of the world, and every individual, whatever be his caste, colour or creed, will be electrified by that dynamic force. It is no wonder that He has touched you too and you have been prompted to arrange this pleasant function". (Page, 420).

Swami Nirmalananda on Himself

As a rule, Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj was reticent on his intimate relationship with his *Guru* and his *Gurubhais*. However, we hear Swamiji speaking on himself as a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, His method of teaching and training the disciples and Swamiji's own method of work for the cause in absolute surrender to Sri Gurumaharaj as His messenger and instrument. These were in the course of lectures, conversations, informal talks and in the process of training the *brahmacharin* and *sanyasin* disciples during the period of his missionary work which spanned a good three decades and more.

The earliest on record are the few words he spoke in reply to the Addresses of Welcome presented to him by the Haripad Association on the 16th of February 1911.

".....I view these Addresses not as presented to my humble self, but as indicating their spirit of *bhakti* towards Sri Gurumaharaj". (*Prabuddha Bharata*, XVI, Page 95). Again, in reply to the Welcome Address presented to him by the Vedanta Society, Trivandrum in September 1911, he said, "There in an American saying, Love me, love my dog'. It is your love for Sri Ramakrishna that makes you honour this dog of His" (*Swami Nirmalananda. His Life and Teachings*, Page. 67).

When some devotees urged Swamiji to meet the Maharaja of Travancore, as was done by his *Gurubhais*, Swamis Vivekananda and Ramakrishnananda, he reluctantly agreed. Rejecting the stereotyped letter drafted to the highness, Swamiji himself dictated the sentences reflecting the dignity of a sanyasin : "I am a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. As I have come to your capital, I think I should convey my blessings to you in person....." Owing to illness, the Maharaja could not receive Swamiji on that occasion. Swamiji never cared to meet the Maharaja on any of the numerous occasions he had visited Trivandrum. (Ibid Page. 70)

At the opening of the first Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Haripad in 1913, Swamiji permitted devotees belonging to all castes to enter the ashrama and to worship Bhagavan. At this, the caste Hindu devotees protested and threatened to withdraw their support to the ashrama. Thundering came Swamiji's instantaneous reply, "Everyone of you may desert me. But I cannot lower my ideal. If you make me starve, I know that Sri Gurumaharaj will come and feed me". (Page 82)

After giving *sanyasa* to the first batch of eleven *brahmacharins* at Haripad on 23rd December 1923, Swamiji said, "I have merely entrusted them to Sri Gurumaharaj. They have been dedicated to Him. I have no more concern with them. Sri Gurumaharaj will lead them. I am merely His tool..... I am merely a gramophone reproducing His ideas. Swami Vivekananda was a great pipe through which the ideas of Sri Gurumaharaj flowed. We (His disciples) are small pipes fitted for the same purpose". (Page 132)

After the consecration of the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Ponnampet in Coorg on 10th June 1927, devotees like Sri. Chengappa and Sri. Kalamaiyah said that they had to thank Swamiji for the ashrama.

To which Swamiji said, "No, no, they have to thank Sri Gurumaharaj. It is His grace that has brought this ashrama into being. Through His grace, I have got an insight, a peculiar sense whereby I can smell the places He likes..... It is involuntarily that I smell it, by His grace..... It (the ashrama) is not my work, it is His. So, the ashrama will go on". (Page 149)

At the end of his extensive tour in the North in 1927, Swamiji was getting ready to leave for Burma. But he was seriously ill and the doctors advised him complete rest. However, Swamiji said "I am only an instrument of Sri. Ramakrishna. As long as the body lasts, I will serve His cause. I do not mind disease or anything else". And he left for Rangoon without changing the travel schedule fixed earlier. (Page 152)

After a short tour of Bengal in 1935, Swamiji returned to Calcutta where he fell ill. The doctors attending on him pronounced his condition not only critical but even fatal. But Swamiji told his personal doctor and devotee, "Don't be anxious. I tell you I am not going to die now. There is some more work to be done for Sri Gurumaharaj and I must live to finish it". (Page 160)

"Let Sri Gurumaharaj's will be done. I am to work and obey His command to my last breath. No question, no flinching. Absolute submission. *Wah Guru ki fatefi*" (Page 130)

Swamiji spent the last two years of his life (1936-'38) at his favourite Niranjan Ashrama, Ottapalam, using the time largely in casting his monastic disciples and the inmates of the ashrama into the Ramakrishna mould. In stamping out their defects and drawbacks, he appeared to be a strict disciplinarian and a severe task-master. To a disciple who failed to do his duty promptly, Swamiji said.

"You are so absent-minded and careless that you do not attend to things whole-heartedly. I had the good fortune to see and serve a greater *Paramahansa* than any of you. He was so immersed in God that He could not notice if His clothes were blown away from his body. Yet, He was very particular in attending to the details of every work whole-heartedly. He used to take us to task for negligence or carelessness in matters however small. But you go about doing your work half-hartedly and carelessly. That, perhaps, is your notion of the spirit of *sanyasa*! Non-attachment does not mean carelessness, indifference or half-heartedness in work. It means work with one-pointed attention.....". (Page 168-69)

"Personality indeed ! You depend on a personality? Sri Gurumaharaj is the personality, the power behind all work. Have you faith in Him and do you hold yourselves as mere instruments in His hands?..... This is the mistake with you all - you have no faith in Him. If you surrender yourselves at His feet and then work boldly, success and other things are sure to follow". (Page 170).

About the mode of worshipping Bhagavan, Swamiji advised a disciple who confessed that he knew nothing about it, "What would you do if Sri Gurumaharaj were alive and you were attending on Him? Do likewise. Feel His presence and feel that you are attending on Him. Such faith and such service will make Him present here always. Attend on Him with faith, purity and devotion..... Devoted service to Sri Gurumaharaj is *tapasya*. What we gained by our pilgrimage and *tapasya*, Shashi Maharaj attained by his constant and devoted service". (Pages, 171-172)

Class Talk, Haripad, held on 20-02-1911

"The Ramakrishna Mission has a divine agency behind it. It was not men or money that brought it into being . At the time of His *mahasamadhi*, Sri Ramakrishna had no earthly possession whatever. His disciples, the young *sanyasins*, lived in an old, dilapidated house. Its roof was leaky and it was believed to be haunted. We were all packed in it like sardines. No one knew whence the next meal would come. To beg of the educated circles in Calcutta was sorely trying - at the most a handful of rice after an hour's abuse. Some times, we had only their abuse! And see, how that band of poor boys has influenced the world!..... As one who was in the band of those poor boys who ate rice without curry and lived in that haunted, dilapidated house, I have firm faith that it will grow". (Page 195-'96)

"A mother who went to Tulasi Maharaj (Swami Nirmalananda) to bow before him and touch his feet tried harriedly to snatch away her son who had by then crept on to the Swamiji's lap. Preventing it, Tulasi Maharaj said. 'Tell him when he grows up that he was fortunate to sit on the lap of a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Deva. That, perchance, might be enough for his spiritual progress'".

(Page 85, *Swami Nirmalananda*, Brahma Gopal Dutt, Calcutta, 1991)

Seeing a photo of Sri Ramakrishna dressed in *kāshāya*, Swamiji remarked, "I had seen Sri Gurumaharaj clad in *kāshāya* only once in my life. During a considerable portion of His *sādhana* period, He had to wear *kāshāya*. But ordinarily, he wore only white clothes". (Haripad, 14-8-'12., Page 197)

"When Swami Abhedananda and myself were practising *tapasya* at Rishikesh, we found a practical example of fearlessness which comes out of realisaion. There was a sanyasin on the opposite bank of the river. He was suddenly seized by a tiger. Even while in its jaws, he was shouting 'so 'ham, so 'ham'. We could distinctly hear his triumphant shouts. It continued to the very end. We narrated this to Swami Vivekananda. He has mentioned it in one of his lactures" (in America). (Page 200)

In the course of a talk held in Mahe in August 1923, Swamiji said, ".....Once, He (Sri Ramakrishna) told us of a vision He had in which He saw people who bored the upper part of their ears (these were Tamilians, as we knew in later years) and Europeans who came and worshipped Him and spoke to Him in languages which He did not know. 'Where are they, why don't they come?', we asked Him. 'Wait, you will see them', He said. Every word of His has now come true.... To know Him, one has to pray as Arjuna prayed to Sri Krishna. It is very difficult indeed. We ourselves knew very little about Him at that time....." (Page 269)

Clarifying some points raised by devotees gathered at the conversation held in Swami Turiyanandaji Hall at the Sri Ramakrishan Sevashrama, Benares on 25th February 1928, Swamiji said, "There is a movement nowadays to make a classification in this manner. So-and-so is a two-anna disciple, so-and-so a four-anna disciple and so on. Wherefrom did these people know all this? We are still living when they are introducing such fables!..... Again, we find in modern books such statements as the following, Sri Ramakrishna Himself gave sanyasa to so-and-so and not to so-and-so! Do you know the real fact?"

"After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda took me from my house to the Mutt. After a few days' coming and going, Swamiji said, 'Where would you go? Stay here'. From that time, I lived in the Baranagore Mutt. Then, one day, Swamiji selected the *mantrās* necessary for taking *sanyasa* from *The Mahā-Nirvāna Tantra* and gave *sanyasa* to all of us. Sarat, Shashi, Kali, Latu, Gopal Senior, Maharaj (Swami Brahmanandaji), Baburam (Premananda), all of us received *sanyasa* from Swami Vivekananda..... Swamiji gave us the *sanyasin* names. He named Sashi 'Ramakrishnananda' and said 'I myself wanted to have this name. Well, let Sashi have it. For, no one has served the Master like him'. (Page 285-286)

About Swami Vivekananda, Swamiji became elequent and said that he stood apart, a class by himself. "Do you think that we are his *Gurubhais*? If Swamiji merely wished, thousands like myself would be created. Swamiji himself has told me, 'See, a ghost has entered inside me, the same that was in Sri Ramakrishna. That has entered in this (pointing to himself) and is making me do what it likes. It does not leave me, it does not give me a moment of rest'. Getting a little of this *shakti*, Abhedanandaji has been able to accomplish so much..... you say that we are all his equals, co-disciples, brothers, is it not so? 'These are all the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa'! That *shakti* that was in Swamiji went over afterwards to Maharaj, Premanandaji etc., and worked wonders... *Are we their Gurubhais*? No, not at all. We are 'jivas', and they are 'Shivas' - gods who have descended here taking human bodies". (Page 286-287)

"It is said that Sri Ramakrishna gave the *gerua* clothes to certain persons. But it is not true. Well, what is the real fact? One day, Gopal

Senior (Advaitananda Swami) clad himself in *gerua* and came to Sri Ramakrishna. He had brought some *gerua* clothes. Seeing that, Sri Ramakrishna told him, 'These are boys with *suddha satva* (absolute purity of character). Give them these clothes'. Accordingly, Gopaladada gave us these *gerua* clothes. This is the real story... At one time, Sri Ramakrishna performed a *puja* for our sake at Cossipore and gave us the *prasad* of *Kali puja*. Saradanandaji was not there at that time. When he came the next day, he was given the *prasad*'. (Pages, 290-291)

"In the presence of a *mahāpurusha*, we feel an elevation in ourselves. Noble and holy thoughts arise in the mind when we are near them. I still remember the days we used to go to *Bhagavan*. We were simple students then. But approaching *Bhagavan* was like entering a higher world". (Page, 314)

Ponnampet, 9th June 1927

"Those who have not seen Sri Gurumaharaj or Swamiji do all these (lecturing, doing philanthropic activities, advertising etc., as distinct from spiritual *siddhana*) in order to win the favour of the public..... 'Do you think', asked Sri Gurumaharaj, 'that God is snoring in heaven after taking His oil bath and meals? Who are you to help humanity? The pot that is not filled makes a noise and the bee hums until it has tasted honey'. These are the words of Sri Gurumaharaj. Nowadays, no function is complete without a lecture. A Swami is considered great if he can deliver lectures. If not, he is simply useless! This is the fashion of the day. I am not a lecturer nor do I care for it".

"I am now sixty four years old. Forty four years, I have spent as a *sanyasin*. Till now, I have lived according to my principles. I cannot

compromise with them now and follow the ways of others. (Swamiji now went on to describe how, after coming to Bangalore, he "lived, sometimes even starving" and built up the *ashrama* by personal contact with the people). And what a land is this ! Sashi Maharaj wept that working so long, he could not get a single man of renunciation"

"If we are to show anything, it is that we are the children of Sri Gurumaharaj. What did President Maharaj and Swami Turiyananda do? Did they lecture? Have you seen me praising any man? I have faith in Gurumaharaj. If I retain a spark of what I got from Gurumaharaj, people will come and bow down before it. Where do you see a man of *sādhana-nishta* (steadfastness in spiritual practice) like Swami Turiyananda in the present generation? It wants to captivate the world with dynamic activity, dynamic religion - so much degeneration ! I have travelled and visited all the *ashramas*. Advertisement and shop-keeping, that was what I could see".

"Have faith in Gurumaharaj. You work for name and fame which you think will stabilise your work. Poor souls! No faith in Gurumaharaj; spirituality is nothing to you! Where angels fear to tread, fools rush! Pray to Sri Gurumaharaj to reveal to you what He came to preach..... It is not by lectures but by personal talks that ideas spread and people get instructed and influenced. Don't you see in the life of Gurumaharaj (M's *Gospel*) how He visited various persons? Even Swamiji could influence people only by personal contacts and not by lectures. Those who hear lectures may praise the lecturer and go away. Meeting persons and giving them ideas personally is the method of work in India".
(Pages, 316-319 - Condensed)

Niranjan Ashrama, Ottapalam

"If we had not seen Sri Ramakrishna, we would not have believed in God and in *samādhi*. But seeing Him, we could not help believing. We actually saw the highest possibilities of self-control manifest in Sri Ramakrishna. He could dry or wet his tongue at will. We used to put sugar on His tongue. After any length of time, it remained quite dry. We would blow it off with our breath; very many terrible experiments we have made. We have put our fingers into His open eyes. They won't wink. There was no pain or sensation. We have put live coal on His shoulders. He had no sensation. In any condition, waking or sleeping or in *samādhi*. He could control all bodily actions, even breathing and heart-beats. Doctors were stupefied. Their science could not explain any of these phenomena". (2nd October 1934., Page 345)

"So many are putting this question, by letters and telegrams from North India: How long are you going to stay there? *Bhagavan* alone knows. I cannot say anything about my stay. It depends upon Sri Gurumaharaj's will. Man has no power. It is *abhimāna* which makes man think, 'I will do this and this'. What power has he? It is all *Bhagavan's* will". (November 1936, Page 397)

"These ashramas are meant for affording facility to those who have a mind to lead a retired life in peace. But very few want it. Only through great good fortune, one feels inclined that way. Haven't you heard of one of our brothers, Gopal Dada? He was very old and entangled in family ties. But there was some *poorvapunya* (merits acquired in previous births) which led him to *Bhagavan* in his last days. That saved him. He became Swami Advaitananda". (January 1937, Page 410)

The Prince of Cochin, a disciple of Swamiji, brought some fruits, biscuits etc., as offerings to *Bhagavan*. Swamiji then told him, "The fruits may be offered tomorrow, but not the biscuits and other things. Tell them so, otherwise they will offer those things also to *Bhagavan*.... His stomach was weak and his diet very sparse. He could not digest new rice. *Bhagavan* used to take rice of paddy three or four years old, only a little of it that came as *prasad* from the temple. One spoonful was enough for him. He could eat half a plantain and one or two grapes. Biscuits were out of the question. A hard *poori* cut His fingers when He tried to break it. With that tender and delicate body, He practised hard *tapasya* for twelve years! " (Page 413).

Sri. P. Govinda Menon, a devotee wanted to know what the complexion of Sri Ramakrishna was. Swamiji said, "I can't say definitely. His complexion varied with His moods. He looked different at different times. *Bhagavan's* moods were immeasurably deep and strangely varied. The change in complexion, however, was very patent. I may say that, in general, His complexion was fair, not dark". (5th March 1938, Page, 426)

Deprecating the talk of *ahimsa* and tolerance which Swamiji described as 'cowardice with a religious cloak', he cited the example of courage and strength with which Sri Guru Maharaj put to flight a band of robbers single-handed. He said that what the people should practise was manly action preached by Sri Krishna in the *Gita*.

"If you want to rise and be free, you must become strong and active and cut your bonds. Vanquish your enemies, be a terror to them! You must be bold. Shake off all cowardice and manifest your strength.

You are really strong, only you do not know it. You think you are weak. Besides, you are lazy and indolent. It is high time that you shook off this lethargy and entered the battle-field of self-conquest". He concluded the talk with these prophetic words, "I may give up the body shortly, any time, who knows"? (Page, 426)

(Such were his inspiring words, "flowing like a torrent, pure and clear" uttered on the 5th of March 1938. It was on the 26th April that the Swamiji, majestic and manly even in his old age, entered *mahāsamādhi* !)

"Temper, thoughts and habits, all can be changed, rooted out by practising their opposites. As a boy, I was a bit timid; but I wanted to become bold and fearless. So, I frequented burial grounds and got over that weakness. We can all become good and devoted to God if we desire it strongly and pursue the necessary course of action with firm determination" (Page 427)

About some inmates of the ashramas, Swamiji said, "They are sentimental. They cannot stick to any place or pattern of *sādhana* but move on to wherever their imagination takes them. They do not achieve anything, but fritter away their energy. They go through life like rolling stones. What is wanted is steadiness. Stick to an ashrama, attend diligently to your work and pursue your *sādhana* with devotion". (Page 427).

Whatever be the work, it should be done as worship to Sri Gurumaharaj. Be pure and sincere. He looks into your mind. By His grace alone one, realises Him One should never be indifferent in any matter, however small or trivial it may seem. Sri Gurumaharaj used to take Swamis Brahmananda and Yogananda to task for their indifference in certain matters. Once, when Gurumaharaj was about to sit down for

His meal, He could not touch the seat. When questioned about it, Rakhal Maharaj said that it was arranged by a young disciple of Nityagopal. Gurumaharaj scolded him for his indifference, asked it to be purified and re-arranged. He could not touch anything impure or suffer any impure touch". (Page 427)

Letter to Swami Madhavanandaji

(Trivandrum, 23rd November, 1923)

My dear Nirmal,

You have asked me to write an account of how I had the good fortune to meet *Thakur* with a view to incorporating it in the new life, but I cannot find out any incident worth mentioning which you can include in the new book. Besides, I do not remember the year, date, *thithi* etc. But for your information, I am stating how our first meeting took place and also one or two incidents subsequent to it.

One late after-noon, about 5.30 p.m., when chatting with some boys of our quarter (Bosepara), it was suddenly noised about that a *Paramahamsa* had come to the house of Balaram Babu. Many people of the neighbourhood were going to see him. After some time, it occurred to me, 'why not I go? Let me see what kind of *Paramahamsa* he is'. Our home was quite close to Balaram Babu's. Two minutes' walk. I threw a *chadder* on my person and ran. Reaching upstairs, I found that Balaram Babu's parlour and verandah were packed with visitors. There was hardly any room in the parlour. Peeping in, I saw that in the centre of the room was placed a carpet on a small cushion and a stout pillow on it. But the *Paramahamsa* was not there. The seat was vacant.

I was then 18 or 19 years old. As I was young and was not acquainted with any one, I did not dare ask anybody as to where the *Paramahansa* was. I therefore went to the western verandah and there, leaning against the wall of the room, I waited. Some 5 or 7 minutes later, I saw a man coming with tottering steps, like one dead drunk, from inside the house along that very western verandah. He was not looking at anything, but was absorbed in himself. He came to where I stood, looked at me for half a minute or so and then slowly staggered on into the parlour. He did not exchange a single word with me and I stood nonplussed and forgot even to salute him.

As he entered the room, I felt a creeping sensation within my bosom as if my whole body, from head to foot, became paralysed. When this sensation abated a little, I ran back to my house where, after some rest, I recovered. This was my first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna. But I did not know at the time that he lived at Dakshineswar or that his name was Sri Ramakrishna. After this meeting, I did not make enquiries as to who he was, where he lived, etc. I think this incident took place a year or little less before the meeting of Sri Ramakrishna with Sri Girish Babu. I have never kept any diary of my life's incidents, and therefore, I do not remember anything about date, month, year etc.

A few days after the above incident, one day, after finishing my mid-day meal, I went to Hari Maharaj's house to see him. He was my friend from boyhood days and his residence was close to ours. We used to meet each other often. On that day, he said, 'Let us go to Dakshineswar and see *Paramahansa Deva*'. We (Hari Maharaj, Gangadhar, and one or two more used to visit Rani Rasmani's Kali Temple) went to Dakshineswar that afternoon. I thought he must be another

Paramahansa and he whom I saw at Balaram Babu's must be a different person, for I had never been to the Kali Temple before. Unfortunately, *Paramahansa Deva* was not there that day. He had gone to Calcutta. I missed him. We were looking on the different pictures of Gods and Goddesses hanging from the wall in his room. A photo of his also was hanging from the wall. Suddenly, my eyes fell on it and I was startled. On asking Hari Maharaj, he said, "It is a photo of *Paramahansa Deva*". I replied, "I have seen him". He asked, "Where"? "At the house of Balaram Babu", I replied. "Then, it is all right" he said.

Shortly after this, one day I walked from my house to Dakshineswar alone. It was half past eleven or twelve, when I reached the Kali Temple. Without stopping anywhere I went direct to *Paramahansa Deva*'s room and found him taking his meal. I saluted him and sat on the floor before his seat. This was my first bowing down before him. I was so ignorant that it did not occur to me that I must not salute him or sit by him while he was engaged in eating. However, he did not mind these breaches of etiquette. After finishing his meal, he washed his hands and mouth, sat on the cot with placid face and began to smoke and chew betel leaf as also to speak with me smiling. At that time, there was no one else in the room. Only the Holy Mother waited in the northern verandah.

After a few preliminary questions, he suddenly said something curious which astonished me. He said, "The other day a boy resembling you came here and asked if I could act as his go-between!" I did not quite understand him and wondered why he used that slang expression. As I kept silent, he at once read my mind and said, "No no, by the word go-between, I mean one who brings about the meeting of a person with

his beloved Lord. He is the *Guru*, He is everyting. There is no difference between him and God". I understood that it was a hint thrown out to me to accept him in that light.

After a while, he came down from the cot and placing his left hand on my shoulders as a mark of favour, stepped out of his room and slowly walked towards the *Panchavati*. With great tenderness, he said, "come here now and then". Then my heart was filled with joy. After reaching the *Panchavati*, he saluated the spot where he had practised *sadhana*, and sat on a lower step. Then, in an exalted mood, he began to speak with the Divine Mother. I did not understand a bit of that half-articulated speech. I could catch the word "Mother" at intervals and knew that he was talking to his Mother. Shortly after, he returned to his room from *Panchavati*, when I bowed before him and returned home.

After this incident, I used to go to the Kali Temple now and then - sometimes with Hari Maharaj and sometimes alone. Besides, when He used to come to Balaram Babu's house, I would go and meet Him. When He was lying ill at Cossipore, I used to go there also. On hearing one after noon the news of His *Mahasamadhi* on the previous night, I went to the Cossipore Garden. I bowed down to His form for the last time and placed my head on His feet. Then I returned home from the cremation ground at about 10 p.m.

After His passing away, I used to feel His want very deeply and used to pray to Him in my heart. He was compassionate enough to grant my prayer and present Himself before me in another form, fulfilling my heart's desire. This was no other than Swami Vivekananda. He is the be-all and end-all of my life. *Sanyas*, renunciation, dispassion, spirituality etc., whatever I received, is all through his grace. I used to look upon Sri

Ramakrishna and Swamiji as one and do so still. When I used to visit Sri Ramakrishna I did not know Swamiji. I heard his name and saw him only a few times from a distance. How I had the good fortune to find refuge in this embodiment of love and perfect incarnation of grace is a long story. I shall relate it on another occasion, if I get the opportunity. It was he who dragged me out of my home and kindly gave me shelter at the Baranagore Math which had come into existence only a month or two earlier.

As I love you, I write these incidents for your personal information. Do not communicate these to anyone. Incorporate in the new life of Sri Ramakrishna on what occasion I had the good fortune to meet the Master. If my health improves, I shall pay a visit to Mayavati Ashrama and personally relate to you what I have heard about Swamiji from his own lips. Thus far for the present.

Very affectionately yours,

NIRMALANANDA

Tuniyananda Hall, Benares, 25th February 1928

Q. What is the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's saying, viz., those who go over here will have no more birth?

S. The meaning is that those who will accept His ideal will have no more rebirth. You have an idea that when Purna came to the Master, the list of those who were to go to Him had become complete. Did Sri Ramakrishna incarnate only for a few such individuals? Not so, not at all! He is the uncle moon! He came for the sake of all humanity.

for the whole universe, especially for the good of India. When I was going to the West, I heard near the precincts of Italy, the men and women shouting in joy "Luna Italiana", the moon of Italy. Is the moon really the moon of Italy alone? He is the uncle moon; the uncle of all, the moon of the whole world.

Mathur Babu once told Sri Ramakrishna, "Sire, many *Bhaktas* will come to you hereafter, is it not so? When will they come? If they were to come now, I could be very happy with them". Sri Ramakrishna replied, "How can they come all at once now? Some of them are just learning to walk, some are walking on all fours, some are in the womb and some have not yet taken birth... Many *Bhaktas* will come whose language I myself do not know. Again, such *Bhaktas* will come to me who, though they are men, bore their ears and wear ornaments (ear rings)".

At that time, we could not believe His words. As I am now staying in the South, I find the people there with these characteristic traits, the boring of their ears, the wearing of ear rings, and the peculiar mode of pronunciation. I was very much surprised at the truth of His words. They can never be false. Sri Ramakrishna told Keshab Chandra Sen about Swamiji. "See, Keshab, you have got one power which has made you so much respected and honoured by the world. But Naren has got eighteen such powers". Where was the world famous Keshab and where was the college boy Narendranath! And what are we witnessing now. Every word of His has come out to be literally true.

When Sri Ramakrishna was in the state of *samadhi*, his photo was taken in haste. Many days later, it was printed and a copy shown to Him. He was much delighted at seeing the same and said, "Where did you get this? Bring some flowers and sandal paste. Mother is inside this

photo. She Herself has come and taken Her abode herein". Saying thus, He worshipped the photo with flowers, sandal paste etc., and said, "This picture will be worshipped in many houses hereafter". What do we see now? Can His words be untrue? Every word has been proved to be true.

I shall tell you of my experience in a certain place in the South, a village in the interior part. I went to a temple there. Besides the images of Shiva, Vishnu and other gods, a photo of our Master was also there. The people of the place did not know that I belonged to the Ramakrishna Mission. I asked them, "whose is this photo"? Then, they said that it was Perumal swamy. Perumal means *Bhagavan*. Just think of it! Every word of His has come out true.

Swamiji was staying at Vivekananda Mission during the Puja festival in 1931. In the course of a conversation, Sri. Kiran Chander Dutt, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, requested Swamiji, "I am desirous of hearing from you.... how the 'Divine Favour (Grace)' from Sri Sri Thakur was bestowed on you..... Do please tell me about the 'Divine Favour (Grace)' from Sri Sri Thakur". In response, Swamiji said: "Sri Sri Thakur came out of His room taking me with Him and proceeded straight to *Panchavati*. Placing one of his arms on my shoulder while walking, he uttered sermons on different subjects..... Thereafter, He came to Bel-tala, the place of His worship and again offered His *pronams*. He then asked me to bring out my tongue and picking up one leaf of the Bel-tree (wood-apple tree) from the ground, He wrote 'something' thereon. He did not offer *sanyasa* Himself to His disciples. We all obtained the same from Swamiji". (*Swami Nirmalananda* by Brahma Gopal Dutt. Calcutta, 1991, Page 116-117).

"I shall not die until I finish off the little work that I have started. I will leave blessings enough for you all, my dearest children, to continue, develop and extend Sri Gurumaharaj's work throughout the length and breadth of Kerala. You have my sincerest and heartiest blessings, my little heroes. You will work wonders in the cause of Gurumaharaj. By His grace and blessings, you will ever remain invincible."

— Swami Nirmalananda

*(Letter written from the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama,
Dinajpur on 2-8-'25. Page 522)*

There is no such thing as Ramakrishna-ism.
Ramakrishna did not create a sect. He did not teach anything new.
He taught Vedantic religion in words and manners
suited to the needs of the times.
The difference between the religion He lived and taught
and the other religions is the difference between
the footprint of an elephant and those of the other animals.
The footprints of the other animals can be contained
in that of the elephant,
but not the elephant's footprint in those of the other animals.
The Vedantic religion taught by Sri Ramakrishna
has a place in it for all religions.
But the other religions cannot contain the Vedantic religion
taught by Sri Ramakrishna, commonly called Hinduism.

— Swami Nirmalananda



Sri Ramakrishna Niranjan Ashrama,
Sri Ramakrishna Nagar.P.O., Ottapalam,
Palakkad Dist, Kerala, India -679 103
Tel: 0466-2244479